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ABSTRACT

Of the 108 million women age 16 or over who were part of the 1999 civilian noninstitutional U.S. population, 65 million (about 60%) were either employed or actively looking for work. In 1999, black, white, and Hispanic women participated in the labor force at rates of 63.5%, 59.6%, and 55.9%, respectively. According to projections, women will constitute 48% of the labor force in 2008. Rates of women's labor force participation by educational levels in 1999 were as follows: less than a high school diploma, 31.9%; high school diploma, 55.9%; some college, 66.1%; and college graduate, 74.8%. In 1999, 75% of the United States' 62 million employed women were employed full-time. The largest share of employed women worked in technical, sales, and administrative support occupations. In February 2000, women accounted for 14.4% of military personnel. In 1999, 3.4 million were self-employed, 3.7 million held multiple jobs, and 2.9 million were contingent workers. On average, women earned 77% of what men earned. Women maintained 22% of the 34.8 million U.S. families with children under 18. (Concluding the document are addresses and contact information for the 10 regional offices of the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau and the bureau's National Resource and Information Center.) (MN)

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# *Facts on* Working Women

U.S. Department of Labor
Women's Bureau
Irasema T. Garza, Director

***A Voice for Working Women Since 1920***

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**March 2000**

## *20 Facts on Women Workers*

1. Of the ***108 million women*** age 16 and over who were in the 1999 civilian noninstitutional U.S. population, ***65 million*** were in the labor force–working or looking for work.

2. Six out of every ten women age 16 and over were labor force participants in 1999. Women age 35 to 44 had the highest labor force participation rate in 1999.

**Table 1**
Labor Force Participation Rates For Women, by Age Groups, 1999

| Age Groups | PARTICIPATION RATE |
|---|---|
| All women | 60.0% |
| 16 to 19 years | 51.0% |
| 20 to 24 years | 73.2% |
| 25 to 54 years | 76.8% |
| 25 to 34 | 76.4% |
| **35 to 44** | **77.2%** |
| 45 to 54 | 76.7% |
| 55 to 64 years | 51.5% |
| 65 and over | 8.9% |

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment & Earnings*, January 2000.

3. Historically black women have had higher labor force participation rates than white and Hispanic women. Between 1994 and 1996, however, black and white women had virtually identical rates–approximately 59 percent and Hispanic origin women participated at a rate of about 53 percent .

   Since that time, black women have edged ahead with a participation rate of **63.5 percent** in 1999. White and Hispanic origin women participated at **59.6 and 55.9 percent,** respectively. Hispanic origin women are gradually narrowing the participation gap between themselves and their white counterparts.

**Table 2**
Labor Force Participation Rates For Women, by Race, Selected Years

| Year | Black | White | Hispanic |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1975 | 48.8 | 45.9 | n.a. |
| 1980 | 53.1 | 51.2 | 47.4 |
| 1985 | 56.5 | 54.1 | 49.3 |
| 1990 | 58.3 | 57.4 | 51.3 |
| 1995 | 59.5 | 59.0 | 52.6 |
| **1999** | **63.5** | **59.6** | **55.9** |

n.a.– not available.
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment & Earnings*, January 1986, 1991, 1996, 1999 and the *Handbook of Labor Statistics*, August 1989.

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4. Women's share of the labor force reached ***46 percent*** in 1994 and has remained at this level. By 2008, women are projected to comprise 48 percent of the labor force.

5. Educational attainment is a reliable predictor of labor force participation. The higher the level of education, the more likely the person is to be in the labor force.

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**Table 3**
Employment Status of Women, Age 25 Years and Over, by Educational Attainment, 1999

| Educational Attainment | Participation Rate | Unemployment Rate |
|---|---|---|
| Less than H.S. diploma | 31.9% | 8.2% |
| H.S. diploma | 55.9 | 3.7 |
| Some college, no degree | 66.1 | 3.2 |
| College graduates | 74.8 | 1.8 |

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment & Earnings*, January 2000.

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6. The age of children also affects the labor force participation of women–the older their children, the more likely women will participate. In March 1999, mothers with children age 14 to 17, none younger, participated at a rate of 78.9 percent; with children age 6 to 13, none younger, 78.3 percent; with children under age 6, 64.4 percent; and with children under age 3, 60.7 percent.

7. There were 62 million working women in 1999–**75 percent** (46 million) were employed full time, while **25 percent** (16 million) worked part time.

8. The largest share of employed women worked in **technical, sales, and administrative support occupations.**

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**Table 4**
Employed Women by Occupational Group, 1999
(numbers in thousands)

| Occupation | Employed | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Total | 62,042 | 100.0 |
| Managerial and professional specialty | 20,021 | 32.3 |
| **Technical, sales, and administrative support** | **24,842** | **40.0** |
| Service occupations | 10,822 | 17.4 |
| Precision, production, craft and repair | 1,307 | 2.1 |
| Operators, fabricators, and laborers | 4,374 | 7.1 |
| Farming, forestry, and fishing | 676 | 1.1 |

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment & Earnings*, January 2000.

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9. More women work as teachers, (excluding post secondary); secretaries; managers and administrators, not elsewhere cited; and cashiers than any other areas of work. Nearly one out of every five employed women worked in one of these occupations.

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**Table 5**
Leading Occupations of Employed Women, 1999
(numbers in thousands)

| Occupation | Number Employed |
|---|---|
| Teachers, excluding post secondary | 3,952 |
| Secretaries | 2,741 |
| Managers and administrators, n.e.c.[1] | 2,349 |
| Cashiers | 2,321 |

[1] n.e.c. not elsewhere cited.
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *unpublished data*, Annual Averages 1999.

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10. Many women choose the **armed forces** as an employer. There were 195,033 women in the active duty military as of February 29, 2000–14.4 percent of the military.

11. ***Self-employment*** is also an occupational option for many women. There were 3.4 million self-employed women working in nonagricultural industries in 1999.

12. In 1999, 3.7 million women were **multiple job holders.** White women represented 85 percent of female multiple job holders; the remaining 15 percent were comprised of black, Hispanic, and women of other races.

13. Many women were also **contingent workers**–workers who do not perceive themselves as having an explicit contract with their employers for ongoing employment. In February 1999, 2.9 million women were contingent workers.

    Many contingent workers have **alternative work arrangements.** This includes independent contractors, on-call workers, temporary help agency workers, and workers provided by contract firms.

14. Women continue to earn less than men. **Median weekly earnings** for full-time wage and salary workers in 1999 were **$473** for women and **$618** for men. Women, on average, earned only **77 percent** of what men earned.

15. When comparing 1999 median weekly earnings among women, white women at $483, continue to earn more than black women, at $409, and Hispanic origin women, at $348.

16. Occupations with the highest 1999 median weekly earnings for women were: pharmacists, $1,105; lawyers, $974; electrical and electronic engineers, $956; computer systems analysts and scientists, $907; teachers, colleges and universities, $859; and physical therapists, $808 *(Note: This is based on occupations with at least 50,000 employed women).*

17. Women contribute significantly to their families' incomes. Families with the wife in the paid labor force had the highest median income of all family types.

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**Table 6**
Median Income of Families, by Family Type, 1998

| Type of Family | Median Income |
|---|---|
| Married-couple family | $54,180 |
| **Wife in paid labor force** | **63,751** |
| Wife not in paid labor force | 37,161 |
| Male householder, no wife | 35,681 |
| Female householder, no husband | 22,163 |

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau. *Money Income in the United States: 1998.*

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18. In 1998 women maintained 13 million (18 percent) of the 71 million families in the U.S. These are families with no husband present in the household. Fourteen percent of white families, 47 percent of black families, and 24 percent of Hispanic origin families were maintained by women.

19. Women maintained 7.7 million (22 percent) of the 34.8 million families with children under 18 in 1998.

20. Large numbers of women work for low pay and are the sole providers for their families. Consequently, it is no surprise that 3.5 million (27 percent) of all families maintained by women were below the poverty level in 1998.

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